

REVIEW OF *LIMITARIANISM*

I made some slides with detailed notes I took from the book and a bit of commentary: [limitarianism-notes.pdf](#)

I was more persuaded by this book than I was expecting. Crucially, Robeyns isn't (necessarily) arguing that the government should confiscate all income or wealth above some limit. She's arguing that we should try to build a society in which extreme wealth inequality does not arise. There are many levers we can pull to help accomplish that goal; increased taxation is an important one, but it doesn't have to do all the work. Structural changes (like a stronger social safety net) and changes to cultural ethical norms have a role to play too. I like this framing because it means limitarianism can be pursued through a variety of incremental changes, many of which are appealing on other grounds anyway. That seems much less risky than trying to reshape the world in one fell swoop.

One section I particularly liked does involve confiscation, though: Robeyns's inheritance tax proposal. She suggests we "impose a cap on how much a person could receive in terms of inheritances and gifts over their lifetime" and redistribute the rest "to all young citizens, so that everyone receives a slice of the wealth of previous generations."¹ I think, as she argues, this would strike a good balance between parents' right to help their children and society's interest in preventing excessive concentrations of power. And it would go a long way toward addressing inequality of opportunity.

My main reservation with the idea of limiting wealth is simply that it goes against the conventional wisdom of economics. If a wealth or income cap were suddenly implemented by fiat, I'd be very afraid that it would wreck the economy. But experimenting with less drastic changes is appealing.

¹Ingrid Robeyns, *Limitarianism: the case against extreme wealth*, First edition (New York: Astra House, 2024), 226.